

DIOCESE OF DALLAS

Visiting International Priests – Vacationing in Diocese

POLICY ON INTERNATIONAL PRIEST VISITORS

Several priests have asked about the rules that apply when a foreign priest on a tourist visa (or other non-worker visa) comes into the Diocese of Dallas to visit family/friends or on his vacation. The following restriction is based on the federal laws enforced by the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration Services.

THE PRIEST MAY ONLY CELEBRATE A PRIVATE MASS OR CONCELEBRATE WITH A PRIEST ASSIGNED TO THE PARISH. He may not celebrate alone a regularly scheduled Mass that ordinarily would be done by a priest assigned to the parish. (Must present a letter of good standing from his Bishop/Religious Superior to the pastor dated within six weeks of the event.)

Celebrating Mass (or providing pastoral services) for parishioners is considered ‘work’ by Immigration laws and requires that the priest have a worker visa, green card or is a U.S. citizen. Further, such priest-visitors would not have the required criminal clearance and safe environment training that the Diocese of Dallas requires.

We ask the cooperation of all priests in our parishes to abide by these restrictions. Violations of the federal law not only could result in costly fines to the parish but also could jeopardize the diocese’s ability to secure worker visas for the international priests being assigned to parishes.

If a visiting priest violates these restrictions and causes any harm or injury, liability insurance could be voided, and then the parish will be on its own to compensate individuals for any damage caused as well as possible defense costs.

If you have any questions, please contact the Chancellor’s office at 214-379-2819.